

REMARKS

Reconsideration of the pending claims in view of the above amendments and following remarks is respectfully requested.

Claims 1 and 12 are amended. New claims 16 and 17 are added.

Applicants thank Examiner Shosho for the acknowledgement that all outstanding rejections, except that in respect of Yasuda et al. addressed in the present Office Action, were overcome by Applicants' amendment filed February 19, 2004 and also for the acknowledgement that claim 15 is allowable and that claims 5-7 and 12 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form.

Claim 1 has been amended by inserting the limitation of objected to claim 7. Claim 12 is rewritten in independent form and is amended to include the features of previously presented claim 1, as suggested by the Examiner.

New dependent claims 16 and 17 are added, which both depend from claim 1. Support for the new claims can be found at previously presented claim 4 and at page 5, lines 17-19.

35 USC § 102(b)

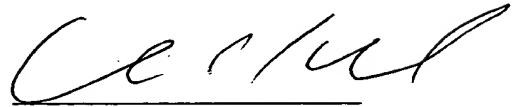
Claims 1-4, 8, 9, 13 and 14 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as allegedly anticipated by Yasuda et al., US Patent No. 5,213,873. According to the Office Action, Yasuda et al. disclose a cationic polymer having two functional groups that will react with the hydroxyl groups on the silica surface, and therefore functions as a crosslinking agent for the silica. The Office Action acknowledges that there is no explicit disclosure of crosslinking in Yasuda et al., but states that the cationic polymer of Yasuda is "combined" with the surface of the silica (col. 5, lines 66-68), which is broad enough to encompass crosslinking between the cationic polymer and the silica. The Office Action states that it is the Examiner's position that the cationic polymer of Yasuda et al. does crosslink the silica. This rejection is now believed moot in view of the above amendment.

Applicants have reviewed the prior art made of record and believe that singly or in any suitable combination, they do not render Applicants' claimed invention unpatentable.

In view of the foregoing remarks, reconsideration of the above-identified patent application is respectfully requested. Prompt and favorable action by

the Examiner is earnestly solicited. Should the Examiner require anything further, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicants' representative.

Respectfully submitted

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Konkol', written over a horizontal line.

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